

Catching Snowflakes

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Catching Snowflakes

by [EarthsickWithoutYou](#)

Summary

In this fic, Will Graham takes the place of Vanessa Hudgens' character of Camille from Polar. The story picks up soon after the movie's conclusion. Although he's falling for Will, Duncan doesn't think the younger man could ever feel the same about him. Meanwhile, Will finds himself in love with the last person in the world he ever meant to fall for, the man he moved to this town to kill.

Notes

Aside from Will taking Camille's place, all of the events of the film remain intact. Will Graham is a highly empathetic photographer and animal-lover who came to a remote rural town to stalk and kill Duncan Vizla, the assassin who murdered his parents and siblings twenty years ago in New Orleans. He became Duncan's neighbor and the two quiet souls formed a quick and surprisingly real friendship.

But matters were vastly complicated when Duncan's enemy Blut had Will kidnapped and addicted to heroin as part of Duncan's torture, then Duncan rescued Will. Now the truth about the past is out between them, and more complications are to come.

Will is twenty-seven and Duncan is his canon age of 50 :))))

Chapter 1

The winter was ruthlessly long and unforgiving, dragging something steadily out of Duncan's heart that he did not choose to face as yet.

Day in and day out, he helped with Will's ongoing recovery, seeing that he was slowly, gently eased from the heroin addiction which had been forced on him by Duncan's enemies. After a few weeks, Will was nearly up to full strength again, and perhaps not in need of quite so much careful attention from Duncan. Yet it somehow suited them both just fine to keep their newfound routine intact, with Duncan Will's houseguest and personal nurse. It wasn't a role Duncan would have ever predicted for himself; in the past he would have laughed if anyone suggested he could be so dedicated, soft and caring. Now there simply wasn't anywhere else he could imagine being.

In the nights, he tucked Will into bed and tried hard not to let his hands linger where they wanted to, in the soft mop of curls atop his head, or grazing over the flush of pink in his cheeks, the enticing layer of stubble over his lovely jaw.

"Goodnight, Will," Duncan would mutter, feeling unspeakably clumsy as Will looked up at him with sad eyes, the color often shifting from green to blue in the segue from lamplight to shadow.

And Will would nod, an acknowledgement of the deal which they'd struck, their plan to go after those responsible for his family's deaths. With that nod, Duncan was reminded of the only real reason why Will tolerated his presence. Duncan had the connections to uncover the truth, and the menacing grit to help Will enact his bloody vengeance.

But since that was the case, and Duncan knew Will must find him repulsive because of past mistakes, he couldn't quite fathom why Will had started following the nod with a wry half-smile and a murmured phrase that sounded almost sentimental: "Thank you, Duncan."

Last night, as Duncan arranged the covers to neatly land exactly at Will's chest and upper arms, then smoothed the hunter green blanket so it was completely perfect, he kept his manner all business, hiding from Will's incisive gaze. Then Will said it again, said thank you, and this time he grabbed Duncan's hand.

Thinking of it now, as he exited the truck, pocketed the keys and turned to unload the paper bags of groceries from the back, Duncan had to stop and pull his thick woolen gloves off to run questing fingers over his own hand, right where Will had touched him. The bright afternoon sun did nothing to ease the chill in the air. Despite the unending freeze of the bitter wind around his face, nipping him as if it would eat him away, despite the glacial-feeling slick of the frozen snow beneath his boots, Duncan felt a trail of fire lingering along his fingers and the inside of his palm, where Will had squeezed, carefully avoiding the still-healing wounds dotting his skin.

He slipped back into the memory and didn't want to reemerge. A hibernation in feelings that were safe, because they belonged to the past. Everything ahead of him was so perilously

uncertain, and risking his heart -- what a cheesy bunch of bullshit but there it was -- risking his heart bothered Duncan more than risking life and limb ever had.

“Hey, don’t you think I mean it?” Will lay there with his head propped up on the pillow and tugged Duncan closer until the big man finally sat down on the bed beside Will, something he had never summoned the nerve to do before this moment.

Duncan stared down at their joined hands, grateful for that long lock of greying hair that fell across his eye and concealed the wild, needy emotion roaring through every part of his body, every fearful, longing strain of his emotional being.

“I really am grateful for everything you’ve done for me,” Will said softly, releasing Duncan’s hand and turning onto his side, slipping his hand under the pillow, taking the touch that had passed between them there to hide like a lovely secret treat, a tantalizing new memory to savor.

“I’ve ruined your life,” Duncan hung his head, hearing the gruffness in his own voice from somewhere far away. His ears were ringing with Will’s words and his heart hurt with the effort of shutting down the hope that wanted to take him over. “I’ll do all I can to help you recover and get what you need, anything you want, but...I can never make up for all that’s happened.”

“Of course you can’t, but so what? What use is it to think that way?” Will reasoned, watching Duncan chewing his lower lip with his head hanging low, running away from Will’s highly attuned empathy. “You were hired to kill one man in a car, you had no idea what was going to happen. What were the premises of the hit? You can tell me.”

“I wish you wouldn’t try to paint this as anything forgivable. It would be easier for us both.” Duncan rubbed the back of his neck, where his stress gathered and coiled with a tight ache, then lifted his face to look at Will more confrontationally. “There was a file. It told me where to find your father.”

“Did the file list any of my father’s crimes?” Will lifted his brows.

“What if it did? So, your father sold a lot of drugs; that doesn’t mean he deserved to die, and we both know it. But the reality is that I never got any personal details about my marks; I just got their picture and location, then I went and killed them without a second thought. That’s the kind of man I am, Will. You should know that better than anyone.”

“You don’t strike me as the type of man who normally tried to make amends for your murders,” Will noted, “But you felt badly for killing my family, because you genuinely didn’t mean to hurt them. You had no idea we were in the car.”

“You don’t strike me as the type of man who would normally look into the eyes of his family’s murderer and smile, then say, ‘so what’? I could have killed you, too, Will, easily. It’s a miracle you survived, and you have my full permission to take my life anytime you like. I’ve got it coming.”

Duncan worried at his lip some more, thinking any fondness Will might have developed for him was just because they'd been alone together for weeks. Stockholm Syndrome, almost, after all the trauma Will had recently endured. As for Duncan's own trauma, he'd earned that too, and then some.

"Our relationship isn't normal," Will posited, weighing each word as he considered, then released it, as if these revelations were still developing, but it felt better to say them out loud. "You hurt me, you ruined my life. But under an entirely different set of circumstances, this time knowing exactly what you were doing, you chose to protect me, save me, help me. There was no need to send me the money, and I know it didn't alleviate your guilt. I can see that in your face. You also could have left me to languish in addiction and fade into death on that couch in Blut's mansion. There was no need to carry me back home and dedicate all your time to nursing me back to health when you were half-dead yourself. I feel that, Duncan. You're my friend now. Don't you want to be?"

Duncan didn't know whether to laugh or scream. "That's a complicated question."

He wanted to kiss Will so badly that it was a matter of continual torment, wanted to lay him down and make lingering, passionate love to him and let him feel all of the heartfelt devotion that gushed from his heart every time their eyes met or he heard Will's voice, felt the heat of his body so close. It had been like this since the first day he looked across the yard and saw an adorably flustered young man tiring himself out chopping wood. Will was brilliant, damaged, sweet, amazingly strong and far too beautiful. Duncan bit the inside of his own cheek in rebuke for these stupid, unrequited thoughts, but Will's voice was so bright when he spoke again.

"*Oh*," Will smiled, and the smile seemed full of possibilities. "I'm glad to hear you say that."

So, Will had seen right through to the true meaning of Duncan's words: he didn't want to be *just* Will's friend, he wanted so much more.

Duncan's face must have turned bright red, because he could feel his cheeks getting embarrassingly hot, and he seemed to be *stammering*, "I just meant that-- uhhh, um, I was--"

"Never mind that for now," Will decided, the sparkle of affectionate humor in his eyes completely forgivable due to the angelic way he let Duncan off the hook from this terrifyingly awkward conversation. "Can I ask you for a favor, please?"

As if Duncan could refuse a single whim when it came from those sumptuous lips or out of the desire of such a precious, special heart. He wished he could hold Will close forever, take care of him, make sure he was always safe and happy.

He snorted in faux-annoyance and rolled his eyes, making Will laugh. "What is it?"

"I haven't really been sleeping that well. But it's not because I can't get comfortable here, far from it. I've never been a great sleeper, too many bad dreams. And at night...I get lonely. I start to overthink, I reminisce, and I'm haunted. I try to see the future, and all the shades of doubt and hope are stifling. I like the sound of your voice, Duncan. Would you mind staying here a little longer tonight? Would you read to me?"

Duncan swallowed hard past the lump in his throat and blinked his wet eye. *Don't you dare cry*, he chided himself. Pressing his hands hard into his knees, he willed himself to give a casual nod, knowing his obsessive delight in Will's request was probably all too obvious anyway. "What kind of books do you like best?"

"Hmm, anything with a good plot, really, but I guess...mysteries," Will suggested, his eyes darting all over Duncan's face, from his sharp cheekbones to his plush lips and the mustache that was by now growing onward into a full beard, salt and pepper stubble thickening. He didn't seem deterred in his obvious admiration, even by the eye patch or the long scar running down one cheek.

Will's gaze dipped lower, following the lines of Duncan's physique in his usual all-black attire; broad shoulders, well-defined biceps, the muscle and softness in his chest and stomach. A warmly beguiling pleasure began pooling in Duncan's low belly, and sweat gathered on his palms. He liked Will watching him, he realized, and he liked the feeling of giving into Will's suggestive examination. It was getting difficult to make himself believe the attraction was unrequited.

"Yes," Will said more definitively, "I like mysteries. But -- sorry, I should have asked first -- does it bother your eye now to read?"

"Oh, it's fine," Duncan lied.

In reality, it was going to take a long time for him to fully adjust to only having one eye, and the little bit of reading he did in his everyday activities was a difficult strain. That didn't matter, and in fact, this could be a good excuse for him to push past the handicap and start getting better at it. Yes, that was his motivation. So, he was trying to lie to himself *and* Will. Great!

Will wanted to hear something new, rather than one of the many books about animals and photography that filled his own bookcases, so Duncan trudged next door to see what he could scrounge up from his own feeble collection. He didn't have anything much around the house, just some hobby guides he had purchased when he first arrived, in a pathetic attempt to establish a normal post-retirement existence here. He told himself he'd learn to take care of a dog, then when that didn't work out, that he could learn how to cook (the cookbooks had been gathering dust for weeks, untouched), and--

"You wanted to learn to fish?" Will asked, turning the educational paperback over and over in his hands after Duncan returned and placed the small selection of books on the bed. He smirked. "You could have just asked me."

Duncan got into bed beside Will and nudged his shoulder. "I didn't know I was going to meet you."

"Life's funny like that. Will you read this one to me tonight? Might bring back some nice memories. Fishing is very soothing, relaxing...you can disconnect from all the ugliness in the world and just...breathe." Will yawned and snuggled back down under the covers, his face nestled into the pillow and eyes drifting shut.

“Yeah, that’s why I wanted to take it up. I was looking for a sense of peace. Pretty ironic for a guy like me.”

Will’s knee bumped Duncan’s thigh. “Read.”

Duncan’s morose attitude melted like the thin layer of ice it was, an unconvincing facade over the temptation to let himself enjoy this time with Will, as if it was something he could come to depend on. He couldn’t give in all the way because that would make it hurt more when Will inevitably tired of him and left, or Duncan managed to screw things up and push him away -- maybe that was the really inevitable outcome. He didn’t want to know which it would be. But right here, right now, sliding his glasses onto his nose and glancing down with a fond smile at Will’s sleepy face, he felt good, warmed through from head to toe.

Duncan began to read in a rumbling, deep, quiet voice, explaining the basic preparations a new fisherman should take, which supplies to gather and how to make flies, what types of fish to expect in certain bodies of water. The wonderful, warm nearness of Will had a calming effect on him, so that he began to breathe easier and didn’t squint down at the page. He relaxed as much as he could, just glancing at enough words to piece the basic sentence together out of instinct. The book had large, colorful illustrations and figures that made it even easier to go along with the flow of the instructional narrative.

“Heh, I know a better method for homemade flies,” Will interrupted. He drowsily explained his own, superior tactics until finally Duncan lowered the book and glared down at his companion.

“Sleep.”

“Okay, okay,” Will grouched, and he was out like a light soon after.

Duncan watched him silently for a few minutes, thinking over his ridiculous, helpless dream of them being together. He’d never wanted to be one half of a couple before, yet now it was all he could see or need. Still, he knew he could not stay in Will’s room much longer, or he’d fall asleep himself, putting Will in danger. After what happened to Rusty, he just couldn’t trust himself not to hurt Will if he woke up too startled.

He switched the lamp off, then padded as stealthily as possible across the hall, grabbing a couple of supplies on the way to his guest room, where he shut the door behind him and locked it. Maybe one last cigarette and a glass of whiskey would take the edge off his raging emotions, Duncan reasoned. But even these familiar crutches were useless in the face of the simple fact that he was changing, profoundly changing, and there was nothing he could do to stop it.

This seemingly endless winter had brought more than a strangely enchanted hibernation. It had brought the two of them together, dragging something steadily out of Duncan’s heart that he couldn’t deny to himself anymore.

He was desperately in love with Will Graham.

Chapter 2

A few nights later, Will woke around 3am with a sharp wrench back to consciousness, sweat-drenched and weeping.

“No!” He cried, swiping around on the bedside table for the lamp. In his panic, this only led to the lamp smashing to the floor, and Duncan came running in soon after.

“Will, Will, are you alright?” he asked, gently cupping Will’s face in the darkness.

Will leaned into Duncan’s touch, those big hands and calloused fingers for which he’d developed such an incessant craving. Why did he want him so badly, when this man was in a sense the cause of all his lifelong suffering? Yet, he did want Duncan, more and more every day. There was no one like him, strong, defiant, but sensitive, wounded but endlessly resilient, funny as hell and often just incomparably *cute*. Nothing made sense, when would it make *sense*? Lately he wished he could simply let go of the whole notion of conventional logic, crumple it up and set himself free. It seemed to be all that was holding him back.

“Mm fine,” he mumbled confusedly, “I broke the lamp, I’m sorry.”

“Shhh, that’s okay. I’ll clean it up and get another one for you. Hold on a second.”

Duncan reappeared in what seemed like a flash and plugged in the replacement lamp. Will watched in a half-confused haze as Duncan, wearing just a pair of grey boxer briefs, swept up the broken shards. He was so effortlessly beautiful, with his messy hair, his strong biceps and back shifting with the slight labor, and Will found himself sitting up a little, shamelessly seeking a better look at that gorgeously hairy chest and perfect stomach, just a bit soft, *Jesus*. He wanted to nuzzle his face all over Duncan’s body, and no matter how many times he’d tried lately to force these feelings back down, they only manifested with greater insistence. Duncan still looked absolutely battered, his flesh covered in countless stab wounds which were gradually forming nasty scars. Will wanted to kiss each one, take care of Duncan as the other man had so fastidiously looked after him, but it was kind of like wanting to protect a fierce lion; he didn’t know if Duncan would let him get that close.

“I’m sorry you’re still having the dreams,” Duncan sighed, coming without hesitation when Will wordlessly extended his hands out to him.

Will lay back down on his side and tugged Duncan into a spooning position behind him, just holding onto Duncan’s hand, feeling the powerful heat emanating from Duncan’s skin so close behind him. His t-shirt was stuck to his skin, but he hesitated to take it off and make the situation any more suggestive than it already was.

Duncan didn’t press himself into the crook of Will’s body, but just lingered respectfully close, acquiescing to this moment of awkward tenderness.

“I know you have them, too,” Will murmured. “Dreams about that day, the bullets crashing through the windshield, cracking the car doors. The blood, so much blood...” The vision of

the dream, temporarily blocked out by his shock and breaking the lamp and his affectionate thoughts of Duncan, came back to him with a fresh wave of grief. Tears streaked his face and his throat hurt when he swallowed. The exhaustion he felt gripping his heart over this same harrowing memory was beyond anything words could express. He used to want to blot it out any way he could, and the realization that maybe nothing would ever take the images and memories away was the saddest thing of all.

“It’s all my fault,” said Duncan hoarsely, “I deserve to see them like this, I deserve to suffer for what I’ve done. But you, Will...it’s not fair. You should be free of it...I wish I could give them back to you, more than anything.”

“You’re different in the dream now. There’s a second version of you standing on the other side of the car from the younger you who’s shooting my family.” Will stroked Duncan’s hand slowly as he spoke. “It’s the real you, the guy you are now. I’m standing there with you as *I* am now, an adult. You try to stop it, but the past you shoots us both dead. We lie there in the street bleeding out, staring into each other’s eyes. Do you...understand?”

Do you understand?

Will had asked Duncan that question rhythmically, repeatedly, with dreadful accusation and unbearable misery, on the day he’d finally confronted the assassin about the past. And Duncan had understood every word, had sat there, meek and mild, inviting Will to kill him, even talking him through that cold shock of anxiety that always racked Will when he held a gun. It was that understanding, a surrender so complete to whatever Will felt was just, that had allowed Will to forgive Duncan. To this day, he had to wonder if that was the only quality which made forgiveness come, or if it was also the slow-burning, aching attraction he’d felt to Duncan since the time when they had gotten to know each other in earnest. It was much more than a sexual yearning, though God knows it was that, too, but most of all it felt like finding a soulmate in the most astonishing, inappropriate place possible. They did understand each other so well. The same dry humor, the same longing for peace and quiet, for simple pastimes, pleasant inspiration, and true companionship. Maybe no one else *could* understand either one of them.

“I’m sorry,” Duncan whispered, “So sorry, sweetheart.”

Will lifted Duncan’s hand to his lips, pressed a soft kiss onto his thumb, then placed the hand flat against his raging heartbeat.

“Oh, I...um, I shouldn’t have...” Duncan fumbled for words, and in the darkness Will smiled, loving his collapses into shy nervousness.

“Say it again,” Will commanded, his voice quiet and tense. “And hold me, Duncan. Please.”

Selfishly, he knew how to get what he wanted. He had Duncan under a thrall, the overwhelming sense of obligation that would compel him to give Will anything and everything of himself. Nothing would ever seem to be enough. But there was a mad aggravation inside Will that wanted Duncan to care for him not out of guilt but just for who Will was. Could that ever happen?

“Sweetheart,” Duncan repeated, and pulled Will close against his flushed, sweat-sheened body, so much hard muscle and heat. Will sighed with immediate relief and pleasure.

“You smell like the woods,” he smiled, and Duncan chuckled quietly.

“That’s kind. I did shower before bed, but...you know, after the dreams...I wake up feeling like I’ve run miles and miles for days.”

Will nodded, knowing why Duncan slept in his underwear even in the wintertime. He’d had to do the same as long as he could remember.

“You always smell like the woods...can’t shower it off,” Will yawned. “Wouldn’t want you to. I think we belong to this place.” *And each other.*

After a pause, Will added, “Why do you sleep in the other room? You know you can stay here with me after we read.”

That first morning after reading Will the fishing book, Duncan had gone online to order the top ten mystery novels of all time, according to Amazon ranking, anyway. So they’d taken turns, reading each other Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie, and it was so charming and perfect, until later, when Will inevitably woke up alone and missing the feel of that warm weight on the other side of the bed.

“I might hurt you,” Duncan admitted. “I have to make myself stay awake, even now. I shot a dog once -- I hate telling you this because I know how you feel about dogs. But I jolted up from a nightmare and shot that poor thing dead on the spot.”

“So that’s what happened to your dog,” Will said sadly. “But you don’t have a gun now. And if you wake up in killer mode, I’ll just...stop you.”

“What makes you think you could?” Duncan’s frown was audible. “I didn’t earn eight million dollars by not being an excellent killer, Will.”

“Humph. I’m a force to be reckoned with in my own way. You’ll see. Someday soon, you teach me to shoot for real, we’ll go after whoever put the hit out on my family and take them down together. You’ll see I can hold my own.”

“Okay, then,” Duncan smiled against Will’s ear, his mustache tickling Will’s sensitive lobe, and Will triumphed in knowing he had melted the other man’s attempt to remain severe.

“Whatever you want.”

“I want you to trust yourself with me.”

“I don’t know how to do that. I wish I did.”

Will clasped Duncan’s hand and narrowly fought off the temptation to fully shift his ass against Duncan’s groin. Instead, he closed his eyes and focused on the delicious closeness of Duncan, letting that be enough, against everything and anything that made sense in this world, to ease him back into slumber.

Chapter 3

In the morning, Will woke to the familiar scent of burnt toast and the sound of Duncan clinking dishes around in the kitchen. He wandered out with a big yawn, ruffling his curls as Duncan looked around from the stove and gave Will a heartfelt smile.

“I hope the rest of your sleep was better,” Duncan said, scooping some scrambled eggs, mixed up with ham, onto a plate beside the blackened toast. “Sorry, I think that thing’s out to get me.”

He nodded over at the smoking toaster, and Will snorted a laugh, not quite able to hide it behind a sip of orange juice. “Right, that’s what it is. The toaster resents you.”

“You laugh, but I once had every intention of learning how to cook real food. One of these days, I’m going to knock your socks off.”

“Of that, I have no doubt,” Will smirked, and Duncan’s cheeks turned pink.

No one else made him blush, dammit! Duncan was so enamored with the tousle-haired young man sitting at his table in a rumpled plaid robe that it was maddening. Or, he was mad for letting himself feel this way in the first place.

And what did he have to offer Will? A fucked up, worn-out old body, a head full of nasty visions of his past deeds, an emotional debt he could never repay. Pathetic. He couldn’t even look at Will with both eyes, had to sit here looking like a dumb fucking pirate. So why didn’t Will regard him with the same derision which Duncan bore himself?

“I’m happy here with you,” Will remarked, and Duncan nearly choked on his black coffee.

“Yeah,” Will continued, nudging his bare foot against Duncan’s under the table. “I am. It’s crazy, but I’ve loved our time together. When we’re done with the work ahead, well, after that you’re not gonna ditch me, are you?”

“It would be better for you if I did,” Duncan insisted, shivering when Will’s toes caressed over the top of his foot. “*Will*,” he warned.

“What? You like it, it feels good, doesn’t it? *We* feel good. And right.” He shrugged. “Why do you keep letting me close, just to push me away?”

Duncan scowled, standing up as the effort of withdrawing from Will’s affection made him want to claw the walls. “This is some fucked up iteration of Stockholm Syndrome, first of all.”

“I’m not a prisoner here,” Will laughed, eating his eggs as if this was a normal conversation. “This is my house, for one thing, and you’re my guest. I want you here with me.”

“Because--” Duncan pointed a finger at him and then began to pace, glad he’d gotten dressed so that he could maintain the proper dignity for this conversation. But just like the whiskey and cigarettes, the Black Kaiser’s signature garb didn’t magically summon back his iron grip on self control, his long held resolve not to bother with real emotional intimacy and all its accompanying inconveniences. Alone, he was free, and what could be better than that? But these days, one look at Will was all it took to make him painfully aware of exactly how much better life could be.

“I’m all you’ve got right now,” Duncan continued. “We’re all twisted and tangled up in the same insane tragic mess, and if you have been reaching for me, it’s out of trauma and confusion.”

“I’m never gonna be *not* traumatized, but I know what I’m doing. I make my own choices, and you should respect that, too.” Will sat back and crossed his arms, shooting Duncan that smugly irritated look that always got his blood boiling.

Oh, that impertinent, pretty face...that slim, smooth, lovely body. He already knew Will would taste and feel like pure heaven. And there were all those soft curls to grab and yank. Duncan wanted to bend him over the table and --

It’s never going to happen. Now, focus.

“I’m way too old for you,” he argued, and Will’s smirk was back.

“I like you that way.”

The words skittered over Duncan’s skin and down his spine in a hot rush of desire, and he felt himself growing harder by the second.

“Forget it, Will,” he made himself say. “We’re just impossible.”

Better to head off total heartbreak at the pass. Will would wake up one day and realize he’d made a terrible mistake, tethered his life to an unredeemable monster, and more than that, a useless old fool. He couldn’t stand to think of it. He could never deserve someone like Will, and it was a waste of time to try.

But his body disagreed with him most traitorously.

“Well, that’s just--” Will said indignantly, but his furrowed brow smoothed slightly as he noticed the impressive bulge in Duncan’s black trousers. Will’s mouth dropped open and it was his turn to blush.

“The subject is closed!” Duncan snapped, grabbing socks and boots, shoving them on, and rushing outside, slamming the door behind him.

“You forgot your...” Will began drily.

Duncan came back in, yanked his coat off the rack, and slammed the door again, but the effect was ruined.

“How much lumber did you have to chop up before you calmed down enough to come back in?” Will asked lightly as Duncan clambered in with his cheeks reddened from the cold.

Will sat sprawled out on the couch, dressed in an oatmeal-beige sweater that would have looked horrendous on anyone else, and another pair of blue jeans to make Duncan question just how the fuck anyone could look that good in denim. The younger man had been busily rereading the research which they had so far compiled about his parents’ deaths. There were no new leads, but there was a subtle thread somewhere which they simply hadn’t noticed yet, Duncan was sure of it.

“Staring at that isn’t going to help make it any clearer,” he retorted coolly, ignoring Will’s pointed question. “I’m going into town, are you coming?”

Will grinned, flipping the laptop shut and practically bolting for his coat and boots. He loved going into town with Duncan.

After coffee and pie at the diner, they stopped into the general store to pick up some of their usual supplies, starting with the really good whiskey which Marsha kept way up high on the shelf behind the counter.

“The literal top shelf,” the blonde storeowner chortled, enjoying the joke just as much now as she had the first day Duncan asked for a bottle. “And there’s a new flavor of those cookies you like, Will, over there by the oreos. They have marshmallow filling now.”

Marsha’s kind blue eyes sparkled as she looked back and forth between Duncan’s deadpan expression and Will’s delighted smile. “You should get two boxes,” Duncan told him, holding out the shopping basket.

“You don’t even like them,” Will blushed, and when he bumped into Duncan, the older man knew it was intentional and not just a result of the tight confines in the small store.

Duncan felt cascades of tingles, just as he always did when he had the chance to indulge Will, and when Will flirted with him. They could be any happy couple out shopping together, having fun. Was this what actual fun was like, for normal people? Marsha certainly seemed to think the two of them were boyfriends, and her face lit up whenever they stopped in.

“I’m just so glad you boys found each other,” she enthused, scanning the cans of tomato soup, and beef stew, the boxes of deluxe mac n cheese (the blue box *and* the yellow box, because they could never decide which was better), saltine crackers, cereal and milk.

They’d have to wait for the roadside farmer’s market booth on Sunday to get their fruits and veggies, but that was okay. There were carrots, squash and potatoes at home that were still fresh, and plenty of oranges. It was all part of their routine.

“Me, too,” Will grinned, opening the box of cookies as soon as Duncan paid, and taking a satisfied bite out of the chocolate-covered biscuit.

“You both seemed so lonely before. So sweet, but all alone. And now look at you!”

Will munched his cookie while Duncan gathered the shopping bags, leveling Marsha with an unimpressed look just short of a glare.

“Just look at us,” Will repeated cheerfully, taking way too much enjoyment from Duncan’s disgruntled reaction, the one it cost Duncan great effort to maintain.

“Has Ed been around to restock the dvd machine?” Duncan asked, trying not to think too much about the way it made him feel for other people to regard him and Will as a couple. Truth be told, he enjoyed the townspeople and their mellow, pleasantly simple small talk. Truth be told, it excited him to show Will off a little and let anyone observing draw their own conclusions about the relationship.

“You betcha, honey, better hop over there and grab the new titles before the Mitchelsons show up and drain that thing dry. Vultures,” Marsha tsked.

“Come on, babe,” Will urged, and he giggled as Duncan shook his head and failed to suppress an enormous grin.

“Give me those before you spoil your appetite for dinner,” Duncan insisted, tucking the cookies into a bag and heaving them easily into the truck.

Will took his hand as they crossed the street, and when they got to the dvd dispenser, Duncan couldn’t bring himself to shatter their mutual fantasy. He acted like Will did, as if it was perfectly normal for them to behave in this way, not like partners in vengeance or unsteady allies, but like neighbors turned lovers, deliriously shackled up together.

“You pick,” Duncan prompted, nodding at the selection of titles on the constantly glitching digital display.

“Naw, it’s your turn. What are you in the mood for?”

Will’s face was so sweetly earnest that a barely-intact wall finally crumbled around Duncan’s heart.

“You,” Duncan replied huskily, backing Will against the dvd machine, caging him between his arms.

Will’s jaw dropped and they took a moment to stare wantonly into each other’s eyes before Duncan’s gaze landed on Will’s lips, and Will licked them instinctively.

“Excuse me, are you planning to hog that machine all day?” A shrill voice piped up behind them.

Will laughed as Duncan growled in annoyance at the shattered moment. He turned to see Mrs. Mitchelson, the second grade teacher from the local school, standing there with her husband. Neither of them cared about the PDA so much as another couple getting first dibs on the movies.

Carelessly, with his heart pounding so hard he thought it might burst out of his chest, Duncan punched in a random selection, which turned out to be a romantic comedy.

“Sorry, we get a little obsessive when it comes to the movies,” Mrs. Mitchelsen amended when she noticed Duncan’s annoyed look and Will’s bright red face. “We do hope you’ll come back to school soon to give another talk, Mr. Vizla. The children haven’t stopped talking about it.”

“That was a killer lecture I gave,” Duncan replied, easing into a smile. “It will be hard to beat, but I can always try.”

He added the idea of himself as a teacher to the ongoing fantasy. Yes, he was a teacher, and his boyfriend, no -- husband -- why not? His husband, Will, was an award-winning nature photographer.

“Heard that was a good date night movie. Enjoy,” Mr. Mitchelson put in, pointing to the dvd in Duncan’s hand.

“You, too,” Will called distractedly, walking off with Duncan hand in hand, excited anticipation sizzling between them.

Chapter 4

When they got home, they tore off their coats and put the groceries away with near-cartoonish speed, and that would have been funny under other circumstances. Will wanted to laugh but he was too precariously close to crying, throwing himself into Duncan's arms, or running away forever. Then Duncan's heated gaze snagged his, and Will knew there was no way he was going anywhere.

Slowly, they walked towards each other in the kitchen until they stood nearly hip to hip, just a scant couple of inches difference in height between them...well, that, about a twenty-three year age gap, and so very many extremely good reasons why they should never ever do what they were about to.

Duncan cupped Will's cheek and slowly circled his thumb over the skin, his voice throaty and low. "Are you sure you want this?"

"I'm sure of one thing," Will managed to assert above the thundering of his heart. "If we do this, I don't want it to be because I asked you to. And I don't want you to care about me because you're worried about me, I want you to care because I'm me. I need you to want this too, Duncan, or I just can't. And if that's the case, if this is coming from a place of obligation, or worse yet, pity for me, we also need to change the way we are around each other."

"Will..." Duncan shook his head with a soft chuckle. "You don't have to worry..."

"No, see, you probably shouldn't ever touch me again if that's the case because I...I won't be able to take it." He clasped Duncan's face and looked at him beseechingly. "Duncan, I don't want you to make love to me like it's an apology."

"Do you really think that's what this is about?" Duncan asked, his voice honey-thick. He ran his hand down Will's side, over his ribs and belly to land on his slender hip.

"I mean, no," Will gulped, trying to remember any semblance of reason, but his dick seemed to be making all the decisions now. His jeans were obscenely tented, sweat dotting his brow, and his lips ached to be kissed. "I guess, I just had to say that, to be sure."

"It's good to be sure," Duncan nodded with another of those quiet, mysterious laughs. Will was fantastic at reading people, always had been, but Duncan had such complexity, so many beautiful layers, vulnerability under the tough-as-nails persona. He had moments of opening up when Will couldn't begin to predict whether Duncan would smile or scowl, or more likely, scowl to keep from smiling.

"What's that thing that keeps happening with your mouth?" he teased, brushing his fingers curiously over Duncan's broad shoulder and down his firm bicep, *fuuuuccckkk* that felt good. Will shivered as his grin widened.

"This?" Duncan smiled back, blushing again. Will loved making him blush, maybe most of all.

“There it is again!” Will pretended astonishment. “Is that a smile?”

“Hmm. I guess it is,” he nodded, tilting his face suggestively, “I guess you make me smile.”

“Yeah?” Will leaned up to press a brief, nervous kiss to Duncan’s lips, and pleasure immediately darted down his spine, singing through every pore.

Duncan’s mouth was warm and surprisingly soft, and his beard scraped Will’s face gently when he yanked Will flush against him by the hips and deepened the kiss.

“Yes,” Duncan breathed during one of the tiny slips of time between kisses. They got their hands into each other’s hair, winding tight, then restlessly groped each other’s bodies, their tongues sliding hot and deep.

“You’ve done this before?” Duncan asked as they automatically moved towards Will’s bedroom.

“Yeah, but not like this,” Will sighed, palm planted to Duncan’s chest over his shirt.

Will went to the bureau and found the bottle of lube and condoms he kept beneath his underwear. Since he almost never got laid, and definitely hadn’t moved here looking for romance, these items were the biggest fucking “just in case” in which he had invested, but now he was glad to be ready with supplies.

Easily, he toppled Duncan to the bed and climbed astride him, leaning down to claim his lips in yet more feverish kisses.

“Not with a man?”

“Sure, with a man, and a few times with a woman. In college, and after, I hooked up when I felt like it but it never interested me much. It felt hollow.” Will closed his eyes when Duncan leaned up to kiss his neck, their hips rolling together, bodies seeking friction. “I was just a passing distraction to them, and I couldn’t get what I wanted.”

Duncan’s fingers clutched onto the hem of Will’s shirt. “What did you want?”

Will’s long lashes fluttered and he licked his lips, trying to remember. It was wonderfully difficult to recall the pain of the past with Duncan’s mouth on his neck. The bristling friction of his mustache and the hot, wet trail his lips left across Will’s pale throat almost blotted out all other thought except to get Duncan inside him, *now*. Still, it was an important question.

“I wanted,” Will determined, “to *feel*, and to know it was more than someone else’s shallow lust echoing through my own body. I wanted to know how fully I needed someone, and that they didn’t want to live another second without having me. I know it might sound like an immature, overly dramatic, wildly ambitious fantasy, but Duncan...is that us?”

Duncan wasn’t big on words, and Will knew it. The way that he gulped and stared up in helpless devotion would have been enough. The tremble of his hand over Will’s face told a hundred tender stories.

“Yes. That’s us,” Duncan murmured, and peeled off Will’s sweater and undershirt.

He kissed his way down Will’s neck again, then peppered more kisses all over his chest and stomach with worshipful care.

The gentleness was too teasing, and Will was overwhelmed with frustrated yearning for more, harder, *meaner*. “Duncan, you can do what you want with me. I’m not made of glass. I won’t break.”

“I know that,” Duncan smiled as mischief and red hot lust mingled in his dark gaze.

With that, he yanked Will’s pants and underwear off and threw them to the floor. With large, strong hands, he effortlessly flipped Will onto his stomach.

“Ahh,” Will sighed as Duncan squeezed his bare ass and spanked him hard several times. “Yes, Duncan, *please...*”

“You like that?” Duncan growled, crossing in front of him and kneeling as Will leaned up to mouth at his thick, bulging erection.

Jesus, Will thought, getting carried away immediately as his exuberant slurping made Duncan shudder and gasp. *So fucking big...* He imagined having that inside him and shivered, playing with Duncan’s balls and licking up and down his length, lapping up salty precum.

“You taste amazing,” he sighed, rubbing his cheek against Duncan’s wet dick and smiling up at him angelically.

Duncan snarled and whipped his own shirt off, breathing hard. “Turn around.”

Will positioned himself on hands and knees before Duncan, wriggling his ass as he pivoted his hips up, doing his best to drive the older man even wilder. He got his wish in the form of another merciless spanking. In between every harsh slap from the flat of Duncan’s enormous hand came a possessive squeeze of Will’s soft, quickly flushed pink curves.

Countless breathy little moans and pleas for more escaped Will’s lips as his head collapsed into his hands. Duncan crouched behind him and spread his cheeks wide, then began lapping at his pretty, tight little hole, groaning in pleasure.

Sweat broke out all over Will’s body as shivers ran up and down his spine. He grasped at the bedding, clutching handfuls of fabric, moaning wantonly. “Please fuck me now,” he begged.

Duncan sat up, slid on a condom, and slicked his cock teasingly between Will’s cheeks, over and over. “Is this what you want, Will?”

“You love to make me beg, huh?” Will smirked over his shoulder.

“Yes, I do,” Duncan answered with gravel in his voice, smacking his ass so hard Will yelped. “And you’re going to keep on begging if you know what’s good for you.”

He squeezed lube plentifully over Will's hole and scissored him with his fingers, staring down in surreal excitement as Will's beautiful body took him in so easily, and Will panted into his arms, "Please, please, please, Duncan. I want your cock inside me, so badly, so much. I've thought about it for weeks."

"Thought about this?" Duncan muttered, hair hanging in his face as he clasped Will's ass roughly in one hand and guided the tip of his cock inside with the other. "Oh, fuck, *Will*--"

"God," Will sighed, slowly backing himself onto Duncan's cock, taking every inch with precise, careful glides, continuing to open up as Duncan grasped his hips with bruising force. Duncan was holding on for dear life, heart thundering out of control, and Will's mouth fell wide open as a spark of painful intrusion mingled with pure bliss. All the lube in the world wasn't going to take the edge off the fact that Duncan was this big, and it hurt very, very good. "Oh my God."

Duncan slid all the way out and plunged back in again hard, and Will thought he might faint. "*Take* me, please, just like that--"

Grabbing Will's throat, he pounded into him with fast, sharp thrusts, and Will didn't know what was better, those strong fingers planted firm around his neck, choking him expertly, the huge cock slamming into him so hard he was going to feel it for days, or the noises that came out of Duncan as he rode Will like an animal. Duncan's breath came in guttural, relentless groans and fierce grunts, and Will grasped his own dick in shaking fingers, thinking he couldn't take much more of this without coming. Duncan slapped his hand away and spanked him again.

"Not till I say," Duncan muttered, pulling Will up on his knees, his back to Duncan's hairy chest, Will reaching around to touch his muscular thigh, already memorizing him as thoroughly as possible.

Duncan's teeth bore into Will's neck as he clamped a hand over Will's pectoral and squeezed. It was exactly as if Duncan was cupping a woman's breast, and no one had ever touched Will like that before. Will *loved* it, and electricity skittered all over his skin along with several implications which he normally only toyed with in his favorite, most secret masturbatory fantasies.

He drove back into Will with long, languid strokes this time, sucking his neck and rolling his lovely, hard pink nipples between his calloused fingers.

"So good, Duncan -- *please* can I touch myself?" Will whimpered.

With a frustrated groan at the very temporary deprivation, Duncan pulled out of Will and flung him down on his back.

"Yes, now that I can watch you." Duncan held Will's legs high and kept them spread wide as he drove in firmly and deeply. Inside, Will was warm, tender, tight and sensitive, far beyond any beauty or pleasure Duncan could have imagined. He licked and then bit Will's ankle, obsessing over every inch of his body.

“Yes, there you go,” he gasped as Will’s hand picked up speed, stroking over his own sizable erection while Will kept his eyes locked to Duncan’s face, fearlessly intent.

Duncan lifted hoisted Will’s calves higher until his hips left the bed and drove into him, his eye rolling back as his own orgasm roared closer.

“You’re close, Daddy?” Will asked, taking a chance that the title might turn Duncan on. He loved the way it felt to say it.

Duncan looked down at him in surprised awe and Will nodded, “That’s it, keep looking at me, Daddy. Look at me when you come.”

His words seemed to drive Duncan over the edge as much as the slick pump of his cock in Will’s velvety-tight hole. Duncan dropped Will’s legs and pulled his dick out, whipping off the condom and jerking his cum all over Will’s belly, swearing in multiple languages, tremors wracking his body. Will’s legs shook uncontrollably and sweat clung to them both. Duncan swiped up some cum on his fingers and fed it to Will, then sank down and enveloped Will’s cock in his mouth, hollowing his cheeks, sucking him fast and hard, then swallowing him down. Will came so hard it was almost painful, and it would have been unbearable if Duncan hadn’t caressed his thigh and murmured sweet words of comfort as the unheard-of pleasure knocked him over like a tidal wave.

“It’s okay, baby, you needed that, huh?” Soft inside and out, surprising himself with every unaccustomed word that came so naturally, Duncan added, “That’s my good boy.”

They lay there in silence for a while, aside from the heaving of their breath. Duncan laid a cheek on his belly, gazing up at him with what could only be described as a puppy dog eye.

Will huffed a disbelieving laugh. “Now you’re gonna be cute?”

“I’m never cute,” Duncan argued proudly, “*You’re* cute.” He flopped onto his back and Will nestled eagerly against him, nuzzling into his chest.

“How cute?” Will asked, giggling when Duncan shot him an incredulous glare.

“I thought that’s what I just demonstrated.”

“I have a very short memory. Remind me?”

Duncan laughed and flipped Will to his back, pinning his wrists to the bed. “I’m going to wreck you for that.”

“Promise?”

He shook his head, but groaned as he began grinding into Will, their flaccid cocks immediately registering new pleasure, gradually awakening. He held Will in place and slid against him as he grew hard again and Will threw his head back with a hectic series of sweet, naughty, increasingly high-pitched moans.

Duncan got Will onto his side and sank a finger into his hole, still slick and tacky with lube, still relaxed and ready. He entered him in a spooning position, blowing an errant lock of hair out of his eyes as he instructed brusquely, "Beg."

"Fuck me, Daddy," Will gasped, "Until I can't even move. Use me for all I'm worth."

"Yeah?" Duncan breathed sharply and drove into him harder.

"Can't get enough of you." Will slid a hand into Duncan's hair and turned his head for a sloppy kiss.

Maybe it was the rough, wet, willing way he surrendered to Duncan again, obeying his commands so happily, or maybe it was the light in his eyes when their lips parted and he smiled, but Duncan's heart skipped a beat.

He shifted positions and got between Will's thighs again, then framed his face in his hands and stared at him, confused. People didn't look at Duncan like that when he fucked them, and he damn sure never felt this way, completely emotionally naked -- he usually didn't even *experience* emotion when he fucked, although a part of him had always craved a deeper connection. It wasn't something he often thought about; why go looking for what you could never have? He was good to his partners, everyone got off and went their separate ways. The idea of ever being apart from Will after this was horrifying; he couldn't even let the thought in.

"You okay?" Will murmured, smoothing a hand over his chest to feel his heart.

"Yeah. Come here." Duncan leaned in and kissed Will, holding him down to the bed with their fingers laced together. As he fucked him again, it was tender and lingering, like snow drifting lazily down from the bluest sky, content to do that forever: to simply fall. When he came, the rush of euphoria was harsh; his cock was oversensitized as his hips jolted roughly against Will's. He moaned weakly against Will's mouth, his fingers loosening around Will's, his body weight pressing hot into Will with a sleek slide of sweaty flesh.

Duncan kissed down Will's chest, stomach and thighs, then pressed his lips to Will's hole as he stroked his cock. His hot, smooth tongue laved all over Will's entrance and his mustache brushed against the perineum as he licked up and down, rhythmically jerking Will and gliding his tongue from his balls to his hole, sucking and lapping. Will came like a freight train, fingers tight in Duncan's hair, his legs twitching hard.

"Jesus...*Christ*," Will shuddered, drawing Duncan to his chest and snuggling him tightly. "What was *that*?"

"I think...that was making love," Duncan said breathlessly. As far as that was concerned, he might as well be a virgin. "But not like an apology."

"No," Will laughed in amazement, "Definitely not."

"I told you," Duncan smiled matter-of-factly, "I think you're *very* cute."

After they showered, Duncan got the fireplace going while Will made dinner. Selecting the “three cheese” variety of macaroni from the blue box, he hunted through the fridge for a side dish and decided to mash some carrots with butternut squash. After mixing in some butter, salt and cinnamon, the result was halfway decent, so he took a chance and added some cayenne pepper, too.

“This is really good,” Duncan approved when he took a bite. “Where did you learn to cook like this?”

He’d often wondered, but never asked before. Even now, having been so bold out of curiosity for this man who had him completely captivated, Duncan regretted the blurted question. It might bring back a memory from Will’s childhood that hurt too much, and he didn’t have the right to trespass on the parts of Will’s life he had destroyed.

“College, because that’s when I realized I didn’t have a choice. The classes were fantastic for the most part, but the cafeteria was awful,” Will chortled, taking a sip of red wine and slapping Duncan’s wrist when the other man tried to reach for the box of cigarettes on the table beside him. “Uh-uh-uh, not at the table.”

“I thought you liked *me* being in charge,” Duncan said pointedly.

“On some things. To be honest, it isn’t about manners, it’s...I wish you would quit. I found you, somehow, despite *everything*. I don’t want to lose you like that.”

“I feel like Jack Nicholson in that movie,” Duncan whistled a low laugh of disbelief, meeting Will’s gaze with his smoldering vulnerability. “You make me want to be a better man.”

Will nodded, taking Duncan’s words in seriously at first, knowing he wouldn’t say it lightly. His plan before meeting Will was to spend his retirement trying to figure out how to relax and enjoy life; he hadn’t been looking to grow or evolve. He hadn’t even noticed himself growing a conscience until he slowed down long enough to fall for Will.

“Okay, I can be your Helen Hunt,” Will winked, merrily eating a spoonful of mac ‘n cheese. “Does this mean you’ll at least try to quit smoking?”

Duncan got up and tossed the pack of cigarettes in the trash, then looked at Will as if expecting a round of applause or at least a kiss.

“That’s fucking adorable. Now why don’t you go get the other five hundred packs you’ve left hidden in various locations of my house and get rid of those, too?”

“After dinner,” Duncan grinned. He’d have given Will anything he wanted, even quitting smoking when he knew it was going to be a bitch. Anything, just to make Will happy. Not only because he owed him, but even more because it made Duncan happy to see him smile.

Dessert was cookies and more wine on the soft, furry rug before the crackling fireplace. Will giggled as Duncan offered him one more chocolate-marshmallow confection.

“Stop, you’ll make me fat,” he said, tossing the box aside.

“Wait, let me just see here,” Duncan proposed. He pulled off Will’s t-shirt as the younger man shot him an amused look. With faux-medical insight, Duncan caressed Will’s slender torso, then determined, “No. I don’t think there’s any danger of that.”

“Oh, you just wanted to get my shirt off again. C’mon, you like my body the way it is, right? I can’t go too crazy with the snacks or I’ll ruin it--”

“No, I’d still love you, even if you were fat,” Duncan laughed, the words coming so naturally that he had no idea what he had said until it was far too late.

He turned red and looked away, a lump in his throat as his mouth ran dry. His brain felt empty of excuses, his heart terrified. It was too soon to say those words, the words he’d never felt before, never said even as a lie, words that used to seem silly. Words that no one had ever shared with him either.

They didn’t even know what this *was* yet, and he was already messing it up with awkward professions.

“I didn’t mean to,” he said to the rug. Will tipped his chin back up and smiled.

“I know. It means more because you didn’t mean to say it.” Will kissed him, warm, slow and deep, wrapping his arms around Duncan’s neck.

“Why did you call me Daddy before?” Duncan asked.

“Are you worried about that too?” Will said gently, “Like it has some extra, problematic meaning because you killed my dad?”

“Doesn’t it?”

“Well.” Will ruffled his hair and shrugged. “Logically, I know that since I lost my dad at a young age, I’m more likely to fall for someone who’s sort of a father figure. I might be trying to replace that connection somehow. That’s in there somewhere, I guess. But the rest of it is just...*you*. The way you make me feel when you take care of me, boss me around, *throw* me around. The things you make me want. I never really knew my dad that well, he didn’t want us kids around him much. I *know* you.”

He took off Duncan’s sweater and they sat there as if engaged in some deep ritual, the firelight casting warm, golden light on their contemplative faces.

“I don’t want you to be stuck having conversations like this. It’s too fucking twisted and you deserve more, even if you can’t see that now.” Duncan frowned. “If I love you, I should let you go.”

“Okay,” Will nodded, pressing another light kiss to his mouth, “But don’t.”

Duncan knew one day he would have to let Will go, but he nodded in return, not placing a false promise to the assumption.

“Don’t you like me calling you Daddy?” Will asked, smiling gently. “Because earlier, you certainly seemed to.”

“I like it,” said Duncan reductively, cheeks reddening again.

“Then it’s settled.” Will was being cute again, and this was no time for it, it was time to start facing facts realistically. Instead, Duncan melted just that easily.

“You didn’t even make up an excuse for taking *my* shirt off,” Duncan teased, deeper emotion shimmering in his eye and the nervous set of his lips.

“Turnabout is fair play.” Will raised his eyebrows and added saucily, “*Daddy.*”

“You’re beautiful,” Duncan said, caressing his chest, “You’re perfect. And by comparison, I feel like a beat-up old mess.”

“I like your mess.” Will leaned in to kiss the shimmering white scar over Duncan’s heart. “I’m sorry you got hurt so many times, but your scars are beautiful. You look amazing, from head to toe.”

“My old boss cut my eye out of my head,” Duncan reminded him wryly.

“Still amazing.”

Encouraged that Will actually liked his old battle wounds, Duncan pointed to his side with pride. “There’s actually still shrapnel left there. If you poke it, it hurts a little.”

“I don’t want to hurt you, silly. Why don’t you get that taken out?” Will frowned, running careful fingertips over the bump in Duncan’s skin.

“I kept it as a reminder not to trust anyone. An old friend gave me that little gift, but now...maybe you’re right. I don’t need it anymore.”

“Hmm.” Will tipped him backwards onto the rug and they lay snuggled up, too exhausted for another round of sex even though touching each other was still endlessly arousing. “That’s nice, just to be here like this.”

Duncan held him silently and they let the evening hold them, too. Whatever the future brought, he felt instilled with an uncanny, alien, yet strangely soothing premonition: that they had each other now, tonight, and that was everything. Destiny had brought them this far, no doubt; their story was too powerfully unique for it to be anything else. He would hold his soulmate in his arms and in his heart and take whatever further gifts destiny had left to give.

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